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# **THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS EDUCATION SYSTEM**

A study with particular reference to Solomon Islands women  
who held New Zealand Government tertiary scholarships  
between 1973 and 1990

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## ABSTRACT

*This is a study on the participation of women in the Solomon Islands education system, focussing in particular on the experiences of Solomon Islands women who held New Zealand Government tertiary scholarships between 1973 and 1990.*

*Despite increasing international recognition of the importance of education for girls and women in addressing critical national economic and social goals, gender remains the single most significant determinant of access to schooling in most developing countries. While there is a growing body of literature on factors affecting the participation of girls and women in education in developing countries, little has been written on the subject in relation to the South Pacific and nothing of substance in relation to Solomon Islands. More generally, Altbach (1985) noted the lack of research on the experience of women as overseas students and the outcomes of tertiary education for women in developing countries.*

*The findings of this study confirm research carried out elsewhere that the socio-economic status of parents has greater influence on the schooling of girls than of boys. For the earliest women tertiary students, the encouragement of educated fathers was of particular significance in breaking down traditional barriers to girls' participation in education. Girls and women from matrilineal societies were, in general, given greater encouragement to enter and to remain longer in school.*

*In undertaking tertiary study overseas and returning to positions of responsibility in both the public and private sectors, the women in this study were in many ways 'trailblazers' for the women who followed behind them. Their position was not an easy one, subject often to personal misunderstanding and criticism as they sought a new role and a new status for women in Solomon Islands society. Yet this was not an elite, Westernised group, divorced from their own society. Those interviewed were characterised by a strong commitment to assisting other Solomon Islands women and to contributing effectively to the development of their society. The study concludes that the interests of development have been well served by the investment in their education.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau
CIT	Central Institute of Technology
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
EDI	Economic Development Institute
EEC	European Economic Community
GAD	gender and development
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
HOD	head of department
HRD	human resource development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KGVI	King George VI (National Secondary School)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (Solomon Islands)
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources (Solomon Islands)
NCW	National Council of Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPGHS	New Plymouth Girls' High School
NSS	national secondary school
NTU	National Training Unit (Solomon Islands)
NZHC	New Zealand High Commission
NZODA	New Zealand Official Development Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTU	Overseas Training Unit (Solomon Islands)

PAP	People's Alliance Party (Solomon Islands)
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSS	provincial secondary school
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
SIGOV	Solomon Islands Government
SINCW	Solomon Islands National Council of Women
SOLAIR	Solomon Islands Airlines
SSEC	South Seas Evangelical Church
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund
UNITECH	University of Technology (Papua New Guinea)
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
USP	University of the South Pacific
VSO	Volunteer Service Overseas
WDD	Women and Development Division (Solomon Islands)
WFS	World Fertility Survey
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	women in development
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association